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Plan Summary

The Town of Arlington is a densely populated suburban community with few large open spaces remaining within its borders and limited direct access to open space resources in adjacent towns. The need to preserve, protect, and properly maintain existing open spaces and recreational resources is widely recognized and deeply felt by Arlington residents.



*A bird's eye view of Arlington in 1884.
Courtesy of Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library*

Changing demographics in Arlington over the past decade have altered the needs for and demands on limited public resources for many outdoor recreation, physical fitness, and sports facilities, such as the Minuteman Bikeway, playing fields, playgrounds, and other sites. Residents also regularly express their desire for more natural green spaces for walking, bird watching, and other contemplative pleasures.

This document is Arlington's fourth Open Space and Recreation Plan. It focuses on many specific accomplishments and other steps taken to address the goals, objectives, and actions outlined in the 2007 Plan and the update to the Action Plan as approved through 2014.



All ages enjoy the Minuteman Bikeway. Courtesy of Open Space Committee

The Town continues to face serious management, staffing, and financial challenges to address these diverse needs for conservation land, parks, playgrounds, and outdoor sports facilities. Progress has been made over the past seven years to enhance several key sites, and several new volunteer Friends groups have been formed to advocate and raise funds for specific parks. However, the Town also needs to develop a stronger town-wide open space management program and incorporate regional solutions to meet the competing demands of many different constituencies.

This 2015 Plan presents an expanded inventory of Arlington's open spaces, documents open space and recreation needs, and establishes open space aspirations. Arlington's natural environment is a precious and limited resource that has been difficult to acquire and maintain, and it needs to be protected ardently. This Plan presents open space goals, objectives, and actions that will guide Arlington's open space philosophy, planning, and management through 2022.

- Acquire ecologically valuable undeveloped lands or ensure their protection through conservation restrictions or other means.
- Preserve, maintain, and enhance existing open spaces, including watersheds, water bodies, and natural areas; parks, playgrounds and outdoor recreational facilities; and historic sites and cultural landscapes.
- Coordinate and strengthen local and regional planning and management of open spaces in conjunction with various Town departments, commissions, and volunteer groups, and work closely with nearby towns and regional entities and with state and federal officials and agencies.
- Increase public awareness, accessibility, and community stewardship of the Town's open spaces and recreational facilities.
- Use environmentally sustainable planning and engineering approaches for climate change and natural resources management.



*Volunteers work at the Wildlife Habitat Garden at the Arlington Reservoir.
Credit David White*